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Message Text

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12
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DRAFTED BY AMBASSADOR MARTIN F. HERZ/LCB
APPROVED BY EUR/EE:NGANDREWS
CU/EE:THUTSON
SITES:QHALLETT
---------- 104884
R 080029Z APR 76
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY SOFIA

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E.O. 11652:N/A

TAGS: OEXC, SCUL, BU

SUBJECT: THRACIAN GOLD EXHIBIT

REF: STATE 76828

1. WE HAVE HAD ANOTHER REVIEW OF THE THRACIAN ART EXHIBIT PROBLEM WITH HALLETT AND AMBASSADOR HERZ. AS A RESULT, WE WOULD LIKE YOU TO ASK THE BULGARIANS WHETHER THEY WOULD WISH US TO MAKE ONE MORE MAJOR TRY FOR A SERIES OF EXHIBITIONS IN 1977, IN WHICH AMBASSADOR WOULD PERSONALLY WEIGH IN WITH SOME OF THE MUSEUMS INVOLVED WHICH HE CAN DO IN VIEW OF HIS FORTHCOMING VISITS TO NEW YORK, CHICAGO AND SAN FRANCISCO.

2. WHAT WE HAVE IN MIND (BUT CANNOT, OF COURSE, GUARANTEE TO ACHIEVE) IS SEEKING AN ARRANGEMENT AMONG FOUR OF THE FOLLOWING MUSEUMS: (A) CORCORAN GALLERY IN WASHINGTON; (B) BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART; (C) FIELD MUSEUM IN CHICAGO; (D) DETROIT INSTITUTE OF ART; (E) DE YOUNG MUSEUM IN SAN FRANCISCO; (F) LOS ANGELES COUNTY MUSEUM OF ART. THESE ARE ALL, OF COURSE, HIGHLY PRESTIGIOUS
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3. WE ARE CONFIDENT THAT DUE TO EFFORTS MADE HERE AND IN SOFIA, BULGARIAN OFFICIALS ARE BY NOW AWARE THAT WHEREAS PUTTING ON EXHIBITS IN LENINGRAD, VIENNA, PARIS AND LONDON INVOLVED DECISION-MAKING BY GOVERNMENTS WHICH OWN AND CONTROL THE EXHIBITION SPACE, THE BULGARIANS WHETHER THEY LIKE IT OR NOT MUST DEAL IN AMERICA WITH INSTITUTIONS THAT MAKE THEIR OWN DECISIONS AND ARE ONLY TO A VERY LIMITED DEGREE INFLUENCED BY OUR GOVERNMENT. ALL SITES CAN DO IS TO ACT AS A CLEARING HOUSE. IT IS CURRENTLY ENGAGED WITH SOME 150 EXHIBITS. NEITHER SITES NOR THE USG CAN TELL ANY MUSEUM THAT IT MUST TAKE ANY PARTICULAR EXHIBIT.

4. WHAT THEY NEED TO UNDERSTAND FIRST AND FOREMOST, THEREFORE, IS THAT THE NECESSARY SELLING EFFORT, EVEN IF WE ARE (IN THIS CASE VERY EXCEPTIONALLY) WILLING TO HELP TO SOME DEGREE, CANNOT RPT CANNOT SUCCEED UNLESS THEY PROMPTLY FURNISH US WITH VERY MUCH MORE MATERIAL OF THE KIND THAT WAS REQUESTED SO LONG AGO. IT HAS ONLY RECENTLY COME TO OUR ATTENTION, FOR INSTANCE, THAT IN LONDON THERE IS AVAILABLE AN ILLUSTRATED VOLUME ON THRACIAN ART (NOT THE CATALOGUE, OF WHICH WE ALSO NEED MORE COPIES BUT AN EXPENSIVE BOOK). WE WOULD NEED SEVERAL COPIES OF THIS. WE WOULD ALSO NEED SEVERAL SETS OF SLIDES AND STILL PHOTOGRAPHS OF THE EXHIBITS, PREFERABLY NOT ONLY IN LONDON BUT ALSO AT OTHER LOCATIONS. MOST IMPORTANT, SMITHSONIAN WILL SIMPLY NOT PUT OUT THE MONEY TO PURCHASE THE BBC FILM ON THRACIAN ART. IF THE BULGARIANS WISH US TO DEPART FROM NORMAL PRACTICE BY INVOLVING AMBASSADOR HERZ PERSONALLY IN SELLING THEIR EXHIBIT, WHICH IS SOMETHING THEY SHOULD LONG AGO HAVE DONE THEMSELVES, THEN THEY WILL HAVE TO PROCURE THE FILM AND SEND IT TO US. (IT IS AVAILABLE FROM BBC FOR SOMETHING JUST UNDER ONE THOUSAND DOLLARS.)

5. IF THESE MATERIALS CAN BE IN OUR HANDS BY APRIL 21, THE DATE WHEN AMBASSADOR HERZ LEAVES HERE FOR NEW YORK, HE IS WILLING TO TALK WITH MUSEUM OFFICIALS ON HIS ITINERARY (AND WOULD EVEN BE WILLING TO GO TO DETROIT
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IF THIS PROVES DESIRABLE). EVEN SO IT WILL BE VERY DIFFICULT TO ASSEMBLE FOUR MUSEUMS FOR A TOUR IN 1977. THE ONLY ALTERNATIVE WOULD BE 1980, WHICH WE WOULD REGRET. WE ARE INCLINED TO AGREE, HOWEVER, THAT A TOUR CONFINED TO "PROVINCIAL" CLASS MUSEUMS (TO WHICH NONE OF THOSE IN PARA 2 ABOVE BELONGS) WOULD PROBABLY NOT BE IN THE BULGARIAN INTEREST.

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6. THERE IS LITTLE UTILITY IN POINTING THE FINGER OF BLAME IN THIS SITUATION, BUT THE BULGARIANS WILL HOPEFULLY UNDERSTAND THAT WHILE TO THEM AMERICA MAY BE A "CAPITALIST" COUNTRY LIKE MANY OTHERS, WE DO BUSINESS

VERY DIFFERENTLY IN THIS COUNTRY FROM THE WAY IT IS DONE IN MOST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES WHERE THE GOVERNMENTS HAVE A LARGE SAY IN CULTURAL MATTERS.

7. IF IT WILL HELP YOU IN ANY ARGUMENTS THAT MAY OCCUR ABOUT THIS MATTER, YOU COULD MENTION THAT SITES IS CURRENTLY ENGAGED IN LINING UP AMERICAN MUSEUMS FOR A HUNGARIAN EXHIBIT OF THE "ART NOUVEAU" PERIOD. THE HUNGARIANS, PERHAPS BECAUSE THEY UNDERSTAND BETTER HOW SUCH MATTERS ARE DONE IN AMERICA, HAVE PROVIDED MUCH BETTER MATERIAL TO SELL THEIR EXHIBIT, AND HAVE ALSO AGREED TO KEEP THE EXHIBIT HERE FOR 18 MONTHS WHICH PERMITS GREATER FLEXIBILITY IN SCHEDULING. ALTHOUGH THERE CAN BE NO COMPARISON BETWEEN ART NOUVEAU AND THE PANAGYURISHTE GOLD TREASURES, IN TERMS OF EXHIBIT SPACE THE BULGARIANS ARE UP AGAINST STIFF COMPETITION; AND OF COURSE IN ADDITION TO THE HUNGARIANS THERE ARE DOZENS OF OTHER CONTENDERS FOR EXHIBIT SPACE. KISSINGER

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